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REPORT

OF DELEGATES FROM THE

General Aid Society for the Army,

AT BUFFALO, N. Y.

TO VISIT THE GOVERNMENT HOSPITALS,

AND THE AGENCIES OF THE

UNITED STATES SANITARY COMMISSION.

BY REV. GEORGE W. HOSMER, D. D.

BUFFALO:
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Commissioners of the United States Sanitary Commission,

Under appointment from the President of the United States.

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THE HON. MARK SKINNER, Chicago.
FREDERICK LAW OLMSTED, New York.

TO THE READER.

I undertook this work that we might know what to say to suspicions, rumors, charges of neglect in the work of the U. S. Sanitary Commission, and of misapplication and abuse of goods. I desired to make a fair, thorough examination. I had every facility afforded me by the officers and agents of the Commission: their offices and books were opened to me,—and the Surgeon General and Medical Directors of Hospitals gave me every needed help, that I might see just what the Commission is doing to aid the Government in the care and relief of sick and wounded soldiers.

Ms. J. 26 Received
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REPORT.

THE United States Government has forty-seven hospitals for sick and wounded soldiers in and about Washington, Georgetown, and Alexandria. These hospitals are in a great variety of buildings, hotels, collegiate edifices, private mansions, churches, a warehouse, the Patent Office, the Capitol. The number of patients in each is according to the capacity and accommodation: in the forty-seven hospitals are about 20,000 men. At and around Frederick, Md., temporary shelter and hospitals have been provided for about 6,000 patients too severely wounded, or too sick to be removed from the late battle fields to distant hospitals. In all the U. S. hospitals, East and West, there are at the present time about 50,000 patients.

I spent five days in and around Washington visiting hospitals, observing the methods of management, and the condition of the patients. I had every facility afforded me by the Surgeon General, and by officers in command. I am happy to say that in general the patients are made more comfortable than might seem possible. Nearly all the hospitals are large and airy — great rooms, ample halls, and many with gardens and surrounding grounds. There was never before such a sick room as the rotunda in the Capitol, in which lie nearly three hundred patients, and four hundred more in the Senate Chamber and House of Representatives. Every patient in all the hospitals which I visited, lies upon a cot bedstead, not upon the floor, and in general the bed clothes, and the clothes upon the patients, were decently clean.

I saw poor sufferers just from the battle fields of Maryland,

covered with the dust and smoke and stain and blood of battle, but in two hours they were washed and clothed in clean shirts and drawers, and had food and the attention of nurses and surgeons. Cases of terrible suffering there are in all the hospitals, and must be—amputations, excisions, painful wounds, languishing sickness,—and death coming to poor fellows far away from home and friends; but the care and the nursing are as quick, and as tender as could be expected.

The food furnished by the Government is too hard and heavy for invalids, and great quantities of lighter and more palatable food are needed in the hospital.

In clothing and bedding and caring for all these thousands of sick and wounded men, the U. S. Sanitary Commission have greatly aided the Government, doing what it could not do, and is working out a noble munificence, writing for itself, on the hearts of suffering thousands, a grand history.

This Commission arose soon after the rebellion broke out. It was a volunteer to aid the Government in saving the life of our soldiers, and relieving their sufferings. It is composed of eighteen gentlemen of eminent position and character. Three of them are of the U. S. Army, five physicians, two clergymen, four lawyers and statesmen, and four men of science—of many States, and of various religious denominations. The Rev. Dr. Bellows, of New York, is President of the Board, and the whole Board, with the exception, perhaps, of the Secretary, gives all its service gratuitously. This central Board have chosen many associate members from all the Union States.

This Commission strives to collect and place supplies to hospitals for the sick and wounded. Its work has become very great. According to its books, its average *daily* receipts and disbursement for the last month, West and East and South, was nearly one hundred and seventy-five cases or boxes, each one on the average containing one hundred and fifty articles, making 26,250; and these articles on the average are worth sixty-two and a half cents at least, so that the value of the goods which have passed through the agencies of the Commission each day, for the last month, has been at least \$16,405; and for the month, \$492,150.

Then, besides the hospital goods in cases, the Commission buys large quantities of prepared food, stock beef, concentrated soup, desiccated vegetables: \$20,000 worth at one time was bought in New York, and sent to Antietam, Md. Says the President of the Commission: "Within a week we dispatched successfully, by teams, to the scene of battle, from Washington alone, 28,763 pieces dry goods, shirts, towels, bed-ticks, pillows, &c., thirty barrels bandages, old linen, &c., 3,188 pounds flour, &c., 2,620 pounds condensed milk, 5,050 pounds beef-stock and canned meats, 3,000 bottles wine and cordials, and several tons of lemons and other fruit, crackers, tea, sugar, rubber-cloth, tin cups, and hospital conveniences. California has sent us a magnificent donation. But it would be a prodigious mistake to withhold the money liberality of our older cities on that account. If our usual income from the wealth of the North were cut off by this great windfall, San Francisco would prove, in three months, our ruin instead of our support. Send in then, steadily, supplies and money! Only a great accumulation of both can give us the confidence to act with the energy and liberality which are the conditions of our humane success."

It will be seen at once that so large a business, made up of so many items, and coming together from so many places, must be managed methodically and with thoroughness, or great waste and loss must be; and there are stories about goods sold at auction on the way, and piles of goods at Washington wasting and exposed to depredation. *There is* an excellent method and a thorough business energy in carrying it out. *There is* exact care, supervision, and book-keeping. I think there is no large business firm in Buffalo that conducts its affairs with a more careful method than does this Sanitary Commission. I looked through their books, and went to see the whole operation of their method. I saw their depots; and their agents, at Washington; and by the way, I felt ashamed, when I saw these agents, so capable, so faithful, many of them superior men, nobly giving their services for so small remuneration, or even gratuitously; to think of suspicious entertained, and rumors in circulation;—I saw the goods in every step of their transit, and I say it is impossible that there should be much

loss or waste of goods, while passing from the homes of the givers to the hospitals and battle fields where the sick and wounded are.

This is the method at Washington. The Aid Society at Buffalo, for instance, prepares ten cases of goods, marks them for Washington, and sends them by Express. A letter is sent to Washington to inform the Commission of the sending of the cases and of their marks and contents. This letter is received at Washington, and copied into a book. An agent with his eye upon this book, watches arrivals of goods at the railroad, and sees to the removal of all that come to the Commission's warehouse; and if all do not appear, the coming of which has been notified, the agent causes them to be looked after; and only one box out of 25,000 is known to be lost! The agent at the railroad keeps his book. Then the agent at the warehouse keeps a set of books, in which it appears what has arrived, and the cases are generally repacked, and put in order to be sent out, and these are carried to the disbursing depot, and the agent there enters them upon his books; now these several books are brought together at the main office, checking and balancing each other; and every morning a printed schedule sheet is filled out showing goods on hand, what, and how much, of each and every article.

And now every day the requisitions come into the office from the surgeons of hospitals, camps, regiments, or medical directors on battle fields. The doors of the Commission are open to all, and they grant goods to fill these requisitions, so far as they can, unless they have reason for suspecting the wisdom of the requisition. So the goods go out every day to fill these requisitions, to load vessels with supplies for distant hospitals, at Fortress Monroe, or further South, and to meet the cases of individual suffering that come every day to the office. The goods go out as fast as they come from week to week.

An hour in that central office of the Commission makes an era in one's life. A father and mother from New England, whose son has been wounded at Antietam, are in pursuit of the sufferer, and come to inquire the best route for them, and where they shall be most likely to find their son. The agents of the Commission,

who are passing to and fro on the army's track, can give the intelligence so much longed for. Here is a medical inspector, just from the bloody fields of Maryland, where he has seen terrible suffering, and assisted in relieving it. A mother from Western New York would go to her wounded son in Virginia: wearied with her journey, her money gone, her heart oppressed with anxiety, she is kindly advised, and helped forward on her way.

Meantime requisitions are coming in from hospital and camp. Here comes a requisition for a certain hospital, and the earnest person who brings it, says, "you must give us all we ask for, because you have done nothing for our institution." "But," says the agent in the office, "I think you are mistaken,"—and he looks in a large book, and reads the record of disbursements to that hospital,—just how many, and how much at each time, and when,—all showing the thorough business method, and the watchful care to deal out impartially. A vessel in the river is being loaded with stores for hospitals at the South, and there is consultation, and good heed to send aboard such articles as will be most useful in the warm climate. And meantime, many sick, wounded, broken down soldiers come in: they have been separated from their regiments in the disorganization of battle, and perhaps retreat, as at Bull Run: they have no money, their clothes are worn out, or they have no change of garments, and indeed have no place to lay their heads. The Commission supply their need, and send them to an institution they call The Home, which they support. It is in Washington, with buildings large enough to shelter some hundreds, —and beds, and board, and proper care, and medical advice, and medicine, are furnished,—and when the invalids are healed or invigorated, they are put in relation with the Government officers, and by them sent to their regiments. These invalid soldiers are coming and going,—more than a hundred, on the average, are resting, and being cured of their ailments, every day. So suffering is relieved, and lives saved, and soldiers recovered and sent back to the army.

Now, looking back to the delivery of these goods, it may be asked, What more do we know about them? The Commission

have given them out in their best discretion, but are they not wasted in the hospitals, camps, or on the battle fields? Possibly they are sometimes; possibly some wretch may have got a place in a hospital, and sold a shirt to a poor sick wounded soldier, or eaten up a pot of jelly that charity has sent to suffering patients. There may be some such cases, but who can believe they are frequent? The Commission do all they can to prevent such mean stealing.

The work of the Commission is not confined to this gathering and delivery of goods. Perhaps even a greater service they are doing for the sick and wounded by their medical and sanitary inspection of camps and hospitals. From the beginning they have had sixteen medical inspectors, men of professional ability, who have spent all their time in passing from camp to camp, and hospital to hospital. They are provided with a printed list of one hundred and eighty questions, all about the hospital or camp, position, diet, supplies, surgeons, nurses, cleanliness, economy of means, &c., and these lists, filled out with answers to the questions, are sent to the main office, and if they report gross abuse, or want of fidelity, the case is at once laid before the Surgeon General.

Does this do any good? A few days ago one of these medical inspectors reported at the office that in a certain hospital he saw the surgeon lying drunk on a settee, and patients suffering for proper care. The report went at once to the Surgeon General: that very night the delinquent was summoned to appear before his superior the next morning, and was found guilty and dismissed from service; and most probably wherever he be, is reporting mischievous stories about the Sanitary Commission, as a "madstrom of munificence" and an "impertinent meddler."

So important have these services of the medical inspectors proved, that the Commission have determined to greatly increase this part of their work: they have sought the service of about forty surgeons and physicians among the most eminent of our country—professors in medical colleges and distinguished physicians. These gentlemen are to give a part of their time to this inspection of hospitals and camps, and the Commission intend to

have eighteen of these eminent men constantly inspecting, in addition to the sixteen who have been at work, for the next six months.

It is easy to see that such inspectors will greatly aid the faithful surgeons, many of whom are young and inexperienced;—and those who are unfaithful, incompetent, intemperate, will be discovered and exposed by these men, whose age and reputation will make their word final judgment. This is a most important part of the Commission's work.

I have taken pains to inquire of soldiers, chaplains, officers and surgeons, what they knew, and what they thought of the Sanitary Commission, and its work. I could give many valuable testimonies to the fidelity and efficiency of the Commission. Said the chaplain of a Delaware regiment, "I have tried the Sanitary Commission, and know that its action is wise and beneficent." Said a surgeon just from the battle fields of Antietam, "O the suffering there, and but for the hospital supplies of the Commission which were there—twenty-five four-horse wagon loads of them, two days before the government supplies came—the suffering and death would have been still more terrible."

Let the importance of such prompt service be considered. What must be two days after a terrible battle with no hospital supplies! The Commission saved many lives, and relieved shocking suffering.

At the battle of Pittsburgh Landing, as the evening of the first dreadful day came, with exhaustion, slaughter, and repulse, a company of surgeons and their assistants began their work. The Government hospital supplies were not on hand, and for want of them, seven poor fellows died, one after another, under the surgeon's hands. At that very hour, a vessel steamed up to the Landing, laden with U. S. Sanitary Commission's hospital stores. The surgeons obtained chloroform, ether, restoratives, all things requisite, and continued their work through the night, and not another subject died under their hands.

Said Dr. Bliss, who was Medical Inspector of Division on the Peninsula, and is now at the head of the Army Hospital, the best of all the hospitals I saw, "I say to everybody, work for

the relief of the sick and wounded soldiers, through the agency of the Sanitary Commission. I know their action: wherever I have been, they have come with their aid; and whatever I have needed they have given me if they had it. It is the best way of helping the suffering soldiers. There are piles of boxes, and the ruins of goods, lying about here in the District, and in Virginia, sent by *somebody* and to *somebody*, but they have failed to reach their destination, and are wasted and lost. The Sanitary Commission puts the goods committed to it, right where they are needed." This is valuable testimony.

But people desire to help their own—every city or county or state its own regiments—every mother her own son. It is natural to look to those we know best and love most; but such discriminations are not always possible, and often are hardly generous. Goods may be sent to a regiment for its hospital, stores of good things, and the receipt of them may be acknowledged, and the donors rejoice in their charity, but the next day that regiment may march on an hour's notice, and be compelled to leave and lose all but bare necessities. Onondaga County sent stores of good things to their regiments, and once their good things were left behind on a sudden march, and again, what they had was burned, so that it should not fall into the hands of the enemy. In a late report the Secretary of the Commission says: "The Sanitary Commission, at the request of General Halleck, Commander-in-Chief of the Armies of the United States, most earnestly advises against the practice of sending presents to soldiers of articles which it is supposed will add to the convenience of their camp-life. To the knowledge of the Commission, many hundred tons of such presents are now piled uselessly in storehouses and yards, and upon old camp grounds: while thousands have probably been destroyed to prevent their falling into the hands of the enemy, and but a small part of all that have been received by those to whom they were addressed have been of the smallest value to them, except as tokens of the affectionate interest of their friends."

Surgeons try to make regimental hospitals what the army regulations do not contemplate, and send home for supplies, which are impediments to quick movements, and which are liable to be left

behind and lost. Gen. Halleck says that the efficiency of our army is greatly hindered by the too full outfit, and supplies of good things sent to soldiers from their homes. They cannot move with celerity when their camps are clogged with hales and boxes. It is best that the government should be left to feed and clothe the well men. In general this is done generously. High authorities say, that no army in the world was ever more amply provided for.

It is said, that when a scout reported to Stonewall Jackson that a Union army was approaching Frederick, Md., and that a drove of cattle was seen following the army: Jackson said, "let them come, I care not how many, I can conquer any array, that cannot march to battle without a drove of cattle at their heels."

For the sick and wounded we cannot do too much, so long as we do the right things. Let the munificence go through the Sanitary Commission: they have the means to follow the armies with their supplies, and if enough is given them, they will distribute for the relief of all. Partial, limited charity is not good. Said Dr. Bliss, "every day I see the bad effects of helping one, and leaving other poor fellows all around to feel neglected. Vermont comes and gives good things to her men, and there in the next bed is a son of New Hampshire, who looks on and complains that he is not cared for." Let the universal brotherhood in this crisis secure universal aid—as far as possible, relief for every sufferer. This the Sanitary Commission would help us do. It knows no narrow discriminations, but works for the good of all.

The Commission has the confidence of the Government. While I was in Washington the President received a telegram from San Francisco, saying, "the ladies of California would give as much as the men to relieve the sick and wounded soldiers—to whom should they send it?" The President sent for the Surgeon General, and they sent back word, "send the money to the Sanitary Commission"—and I believe that \$60,000 are on the way, in addition to the \$100,000 from California already received. After the great battles in Maryland, an order was sent from the field to the President of the Commission in New York, to send \$20,000 worth of shirts and drawers. They could not be had at once. The Purveyor of the U. S. A. in the city had about that amount of

such clothing: but he knew that he could not send it forward in season, because all the Government trains were loaded down with meat and bread for the fighting men, and with iron and lead, and powder: so he delivered the goods to the Commission, and they sent them through by their own trains, and in three days they were on the suffering men.

Let it not be thought that the Sanitary Commission have money enough, or goods enough. Their supplies go as fast as they come. Their expenditures for transportation, for vessels, for baggage wagon trains, for buying food and clothing when their supplies fail, are very large. Their Board of Medical Inspection costs heavily, though some of the inspectors scarcely have their living, while they are wearing out their lives amidst hardship and exposure.

The Commission has never been so well prepared to be largely useful as now: its agencies are established, it has learned to do the work that has come to its hands: the sick and the wounded have become a great multitude, and need increasing care and bounties: the supplies, though coming in every day with such large generosity, are kept very low, and meantime large demands, for future need, are probable and imminent. Since the first edition of this report, the following emphatic and urgent letter has been received from the President of the Commission:

"The cause grows more needy every day. The cries for aid are more urgent and heart-rending. All we can do leaves enormous suffering behind, and many are so blind as to hold us responsible for the misery we have not the means to alleviate. We are all the while *judged by what we do not do*: not as we should be, by *what we do*. No matter if we relieve 10,000—if there remain 5,000 unrelieved it is our fault! as if any volunteering, self-sustaining agency, could do all this."

In view of all these facts, who, in village, or city, or country, will give through the Sanitary Commission for the relief of the sick and wounded soldiers? The Commission can do nothing alone: the great streams of its noble munificence are made by ten thousand little rills—let every rill swell to a brook, and every brook to a river.

floors, and stables, having plenty of good straw, well broken by the power threshing machine. I saw fifteen hundred wounded men lying upon the scaw about two barns, within sight of each other! Indeed, there is not a barn, or farm-house, or store, or school-house, between Boonesborough, Keedysville, and Sharpshburgh, and the latter and Smoketown, that is not gorged with wounded—rebel and union. Even the corn-cribs, and in many instances the cow-stables, and in one place the mangers were filled. Several thousands lie in the open air upon straw, and all are receiving the kind services of the farmers' families and the surgeons.

I hope I never shall forget the evidences everywhere manifested of the unsoldish and devoted heroism of our surgeons, regular and volunteer, in the care of both Federal and rebel wounded. Wherever I went, I encountered surgeons and chaplains who had given themselves no rest in view of the overwhelming claims of suffering humanity; General McClellan's Medical Director had several times been over the field, and given personal direction to the labors of the surgeons, and Dr. Rauch, U. S. A., and others, were everywhere actively engaged.

General McClellan moved his headquarters from Keedysville on Saturday to Sharpshburgh. Just here I cannot avoid introducing an illustration of the pressing necessity of some means of independent transportation for the medical officers. Everything was carried away to the new camp ground within two hours after the tents were struck—*except the medical stores*—they remained a solitary pile in the midst of a deserted camp, for nearly twenty-four hours awaiting transportation.

Our plans, so far, are working splendidly, thanks to the vigor with which you at Washington have crowded forward supplies, and the aid given by Dr. Letterman and his medical officers. We have been ahead of every one, and at least two days ahead of the supplies of the Medical Bureau; the latter fact due to its want of independent transportation. A single item will show the value of our supplies: we have given out over thirty pounds of chloroform within three days after the battle. The medical authorities had not one hundredth part of what was needed, and in many places important operations were necessarily neglected and life lost. *Our chloroform saved at least fifty lives, and saved several hundred from the pain of severe operations.* The want of chloroform was the most serious deficiency in the regular medical supplies, and as the result, amputations which should have been primary will now be secondary or impossible. (The mortality from secondary amputations is very much greater than from primary.)

But everything in the way of medical supplies was deficient: poor fellows, with lacerated and broken thighs, had to be carried out of barns into the open fields to answer a call of nature; men, suffering the agony of terrible wounds, were without opiates; tourniquets were wanting in many instances; stimulants very deficient; concentrated food also scanty; in fact, everything was wanting that wounded men need, except a place to lie down, and the attentions of personally devoted surgeons, (without proper stores, however.) The deficiency was greater than usual for two reasons—one, the hurry of the army in passing from a campaign in which everything in the way of supplies was exhausted or lost; the other, the obstruction of the Monocacy, and the want of independent transportation on the part of the Bureau, which would have enabled it to send by the turnpike. Some blame for the non-arrival of the medical stores, lies in the fact that of all the surgeons, forty or more, no one considered himself charged with the function of hurrying anything forward but himself; the result being that plenty of surgeons got upon the ground, but almost destitute of necessary appliances; this I also attribute, not so much to the want of zeal on the part of the surgeons, or of ability to recognize the emergency, but to the inability on the part of the Central Bureau to command the necessary transportation. I venture to say, that nearly every barn and hospital, and cluster of wounded over the wide extent of the late military operations, embracing a circle of nearly thirty miles, was receiving most essential relief from the Commission while the regular medical stores lay at Monocacy Bridge. I solemnly affirm that great loss of life has occurred and will occur, among the wounded, as the direct result of an inability on the part of the medical authorities to furnish, by rapid and independent means of transportation, the surgical and medical appliances needed within the two days immediately subsequent to the battles.

Yours, most sincerely,

C. R. AGNEW.

A LIST OF SUPPLIES

WANTED FOR THE HOSPITALS.

— *** —

1. Cotton Shirts, $1\frac{1}{2}$ and 1 yard long; 2 breadths of unbleached Cotton, $\frac{3}{4}$ yard wide, open 9 inches at the bottom; length of Sleeve, $\frac{5}{8}$ yard; length of Arm hole, 12 inches; length of Collar, 20 inches; open in front, fastened with buttons. About one-third may be made of this size, the remainder one and two sizes smaller.

2. Flannel hospital Undershirts—two breadths flannel, gusset, at the neck, narrow neck-band.

3. Cotton Drawers, ordinary size and make.

4. Woollen Drawers, ordinary size and make.

5. Dressing-Gowns of double Calico, without wadding.

6. Socks, woollen.

7. Slippers, a portion should have leather soles.

8. Handkerchiefs, good size, (can be made of old linen.)

9. Bandages, cotton or linen, without selvages, shrunk, tightly rolled and pinned.

1 inch wide, 1 yard long.

$2\frac{1}{2}$ inches wide, 3 yards long.

$3\frac{1}{2}$ inches wide, 5 yards long.

2 inches wide, 3 yards long.

3 inches wide, 4 yards long.

4 inches wide, 6 yards long.

Many more Bandages 2 inches and $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches in width, should be made than either wider or narrower.

If pieced, the raw edges should be laid one over the other, *flat*, and tightly sewed.

10. Second-Hand Coats, Pantaloon, Drawers, Shirts, Boots, and Shoes.

11. Quilts; Blankets; Bed-ticks; Pillow-ticks; Pillows; Cushions; Cocoa; Chocolate; Broma; Cider and Malt Liquors. A great want of quilts or comforters.

EDIBLES.

1. Arrowroot, Farina, Sago, Tapioca, Corn Starch, Oatmeal.

2. Tart Jellies.

3. Dried Fruit, particularly Apples and Peaches.

4. Pickles.

5. Tea.

6. Firkins of Butter.

7. Blackberry Syrup.

Wines, Syrups, etc., should be packed in separate small boxes, which may be put within large cases of clothing, if more convenient and economical. Jellies should be covered with cloth pasted over the mouth of the jar. Bottles should have the cork tied or sealed over. They should be packed in sawdust, as firmly as possible. When packed with clothing they have sometimes been broken and upset. Every bottle should be labeled.

On the top of the contents of each box, under the cover, a list of what it contains, with the name of the donor, should be placed; a duplicate of this list should be sent by mail. Arrangements for free transportation should be made, or freight paid in advance.

No more fruit is wanted, and the societies who have been so industriously engaged preparing it, can pare and dry apples. All dried fruit is greatly needed in the hospitals. It can be sent in bags, marked to be kept dry. It is not desirable to send roasted bread as it becomes mouldy, and the expense of transportation is too great. Small firkins of butter are very acceptable.

Boxes intended for Washington should be plainly directed as follows:—

U. S. SANITARY COMMISSION.

WASHINGTON, D. C.

Care of E. L. GYMSTED, Esq.

Boxes intended for the Branch Commissions at New York, should be addressed:

Woman's Relief Association,

Cropper Institute, New York.

For Buffalo:

General Aid Society for the Army,

No. 2 Adams Block, Washington St.,

Buffalo, N. Y.

For Cleveland:

Soldiers' Aid Society,

No. 95 Bank Street, Cleveland, O.

~~Do not~~ No packages or boxes, addressed to individuals, will be forwarded.

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